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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 005357

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY GENERALLY UNHAPPY WITH DRAFT IRAQI
CONSTITUTION, BUT ESCHEWS STRONG PUBLIC STAND

REF: A. STATE 158420

[1](#)B. ANKARA 4965 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Acting DCM Timothy A. Betts for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The GOT is generally unhappy with the draft Iraqi constitution; chief concerns are Sunni Arab participation, Kirkuk, and official recognition of the Kurdistan region. The Turks see all of these issues as tending to pull the country apart, which would be seen as an existential threat to Turkey. Nevertheless, the Turks have chosen to take a relatively low-key approach and to watch the process unfold. End summary.

MFA Spokesman Speaks, but No Formal Statement

[1](#)2. (C) The GOT has yet to release an official statement on the draft Iraqi constitution; MFA officials told us recently that they would prefer not to release a statement at this time. However, MFA spokesman Namik Tan was relatively unhelpful in his comments to the press on Aug. 31, complaining about Sunni Arab participation, Kirkuk, and the draft's official endorsement of the Kurdistan region. Tan said, "The struggle for dominance in Kirkuk could bring conflict and clashes to the rest of the country" and asked that the UN play a prominent role in resolving competing claims there. (NOTE: This is a long-standing Turkish desire. END NOTE.) Tan took a hard line on the Kurdistan region, saying "Everyone knows no region called Kurdistan exists." (NOTE: While this statement was widely reported, the GOT's Deputy Special Envoy for Iraq, Ethem Tokdemir, observed to us that Tan had quickly corrected himself, saying there was no "state" called Kurdistan. END NOTE.) While noting some problems with Sunni Arab participation in the process, he added that some Sunnis have voiced their acceptance of the draft, and Turkey will follow closely the process leading up to the Oct. 15 referendum. Since Tan's press conference, Turkey's leadership has said little in public about the constitution, and the Turkish press has barely covered it. Indeed, during a wide-ranging Sept. 7 conversation with the Charge, MFA Under Secretary Tuygan did not even raise the constitution.

MFA Officials: Sunni Arabs the Key

[1](#)3. (C) On Sept. 1, PolMilCouns called on Tokdemir to deliver reftel points. Tokdemir characterized the draft as a "text of balance," and noted that the document left significant room for the Iraqi legislature to pass laws "to fill out the framework." Therefore, Tokdemir said, the composition of the next Iraqi parliament will be of special importance. Sunni participation--both on Oct. 15 but also in the subsequent national elections--"will therefore be vital," he added. Though Tokdemir expressed confidence that many more Sunni Arabs will participate than did in the Jan. 30 elections, he asked that we continue our efforts to get them to do so, noting that the Turks will do the same.

[1](#)4. (C) Tokdemir passed on reports that Iraqi Kurds in Mosul had already begun attempts to intimidate the Sunni Arab population there into not voting in the referendum (on the assumption they will vote "no"). PolMilCouns responded that these are serious allegations, and requested that Tokdemir provide evidence. (He didn't.) We acknowledged, however, that there will be some elements in Iraq who want to stop the political process.

Kirkuk: Stick With Article 58

[1](#)5. (C) On Kirkuk, Tokdemir said it was positive that TAL Article 58 had been preserved in the draft constitution, noting that under Article 58 "there are many steps between now and a referendum." He repeated familiar Turkish concerns about Iraqi Kurds moving into Kirkuk in large numbers over the past two years. (NOTE: MFA officials have raised many similar concerns about Kirkuk in previous discussions on the constitution (ref b). END NOTE.)

Comment: Keep Iraq Together

[1](#)6. (C) What lies behind the Turks' complaints--Sunni Arab

participation, Kirkuk, and official recognition of the Kurdistan region--is Turkey's overall policy goal for Iraq: that the country stays together and that an independent Kurdistan does not arise. They see Sunni frustration as fueling sectarian strife and the insurgency, both of which (Turks believe) would tend to pull the country apart. Additionally, the Turks see an oil-rich Kirkuk under Kurdish control as the political and economic base for an independent Kurdish state. Such a state would be an existential threat to Turkey, which fears it would seek to expand to include southeast Turkey, or otherwise encourage Kurdish separatist sentiments there.

17. (C) Comment, cont.: While the Turks are generally unhappy with the draft constitution, they understand that it was a compromise document (at least between the Shia and the Kurds, in their view) and that there are gaps to be filled in later. Turkish officials have told us that they will carry on with their outreach to all the political players in Iraq--including and especially the Sunnis--both in the country and also through political party training in Turkey. The GOT remains nervous about Kirkuk, and is concerned that the deliberate pace Article 58 lays out will be overridden by what they view as unchecked Kurdish expansionism. Still, the Turks have wisely chosen not to take a "sky is falling" approach, at least not publicly, until they more fully evaluate a final text and the way the political process shapes up as we approach the referendum.

MCELDOWNEY